

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15
CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 DODE-00 L-03 ACDA-12 EB-08
TRSE-00 OMB-01 IO-13 /097 W
-----065711 211509Z /50

P 211435Z AUG 78
FM USMISSION USNATO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3403
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY VALLETTA
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 USNATO 07739

E.O.11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: NATO, PEPR, MT, LY
SUBJECT: MALTA'S LIBYAN OPTION: MALTESE/LIBYAN MILITARY
RELATIONSHIP, ET.AL.

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REFS: (A) STATE 204506 (DTG 120111Z AUG 78),
(B) VALLETTA 2585 (DTG 101352Z AUG 78), (C) VALLETTA 2064
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1. SUMMARY: NATO'S PRIMARY INTEREST IN MALTA CONTINUES TO
BE TO DENY ACCESS, PARTICULARLY PORT FACILITIES, TO THE
SOVIETS. WE BELIEVE THAT THIS POLICY GOAL WOULD NOT BE
GREATLY ENDANGERED EVEN IF MINTOFF DOES PICK UP THE "LIBYA
OPTION", AND THUS NO DRASTIC REORDERING OF US POLICY
TOWARD MALTA IS REQUIRED. HOWEVER, THE US SHOULD NOT VIEW
THE PROSPECT OF STRONGER MALTESE TIES WITH LIBYA WITH
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EQUANIMITY. THUS WE ARE FAVORABLY INCLINED TOWARD VALLETTA'S
SUGGESTION THAT WE ENCOURAGE SELECTED EUROPEAN ALLIES TO
OFFER MALTA MILITARY SUPPLY ARRANGEMENTS (AS OPPOSED TO
BUDGETARY SUPPORT) TO LESSEN THE CHANCES OF MINTOFF'S
TURNING EXCLUSIVELY TO QHADHAFI. WE SHARE VALLETTA'S VIEW
THAT WE SHOULD LET THE EUROPEANS TAKE THE LEAD AND FURTHER
BELIEVE WE SHOULD RESTRICT OUR ENCOURAGEMENT TO RESPONSES

TO THEIR REQUESTS FOR US VIEWS ON THE MALTA SITUATION. OPPORTUNITIES TO DO THIS SHOULD NOT BE LACKING; BUT WE SHOULD AVOID GETTING INVOLVED IN THE SPECIFICS OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE PACKAGES. END SUMMARY.

2. FROM THE NATO MILITARY STANDPOINT, MALTA'S GREATEST IMPORTANCE IS IN DENYING ITS PORT FACILITIES TO THE SOVIET MEDITERRANEAN SQUADRON (SOVMEDRON). IN OUR JUDGEMENT, THIS BASIC INTEREST WOULD NOT BE IN IMMEDIATE JEOPARDY EVEN WERE MINTOFF TO PLAY HIS "LIBYAN OPTION" TO THE HILT. MINTOFF'S OWN EMPHASIS DOMESTICALLY ON MALTESE NEUTRALITY, "NONALIGNMENT", AND EXCLUSION OF THE "SUPERPOWERS", AS WELL AS LIBYA'S OWN INDEPENDENT "NON-SURROGATE" STATUS VIS-A-VIS THE SOVIET UNION (REF D) ARE AMONG THE FACTORS THAT MAKE IT UNLIKELY TO US THAT MALTESE PORT FACILITIES AND HOSPITALITY WILL BECOME AVAILABLE TO THE RUSSIANS.

3. ACCORDINGLY, WE DO NOT SEE ANY DRASTIC RESTRUCTURING OF US POLICY AS NECESSARY DESPITE THE POSSIBILITY OF CLOSER LIBYAN-MALTESE TIES. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, AS IN THE PAST, WE SHOULD STAY ALERT FOR OPPORTUNITIES (TRADE, INVESTMENT, ETC.) WHICH WILL UNDERLINE TO MALTA'S TRADITIONALLY WESTERN-ORIENTED POPULATION OUR OWN AND THE WEST'S INTEREST IN THE FUTURE WELL BEING AND INDEPENDENCE OF MALTA.

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4. IN OTHER WORDS, WE SHOULD NOT VIEW DEVELOPMENT OF STRONGER LIBYA-MALTA TIES WITH EQUANIMITY. IT IS CLEARLY IN OUR INTEREST TO DO WHAT WE REASONABLY CAN TO DIMINISH THEIR POTENTIALLY ADVERSE IMPACT WHILE REALIZING THAT A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF STRENGTHENING OF THE LIBYA/MALTA RELATIONSHIP IS PROBABLY INEVITABLE.

5. IN THIS CONTEXT AMBASSADOR LAINGEN'S SUGGESTION IN REF B THAT THE US DISCUSS WITH AND ENCOURAGE SELECTED EUROPEAN ALLIES TO ASSIST MALTA MILITARILY SO AS TO LESSEN MALTESE RELIANCE ON LIBYA STRIKES US AS DESIRABLE ON POLICY GROUNDS. IF THE US CAN IN FACT ENCOURAGE THE EUROPEANS TO COME UP WITH A SUITABLE PACKAGE FOR MALTA, THIS WOULD BE A CLEAR GAIN.

6. WE BELIEVE THE EUROPEANS SHOULD HAVE THE LEAD ON MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOR MALTA. ACCORDINGLY, RATHER THAN APPROACHING SELECTED ALLIES DIRECTLY, WE SHOULD, IN OUR VIEW, RESTRICT OUR EFFORTS TO RESPONDING TO EUROPEAN REQUESTS FOR OUR VIEWS ON THE MALTA SITUATION. WE BELIEVE THAT NUMEROUS OPPORTUNITIES WILL ARISE WHICH WILL PERMIT US TO MAKE THE POINTS SUGGESTED BY EMBASSY VALLETTA. WE

FURTHER BELIEVE THAT IN THESE DISCUSSIONS WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE IN GENERAL TERMS THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MILITARY PACKAGE BUT NOT BECOME INVOLVED IN THE DETAILS. IT WILL NOT BE EASY TO DRAW THE LINE BETWEEN GENERAL EXHORTATION AND SPECIFIC INVOLVEMENT PARTICULARLY SINCE OUR EUROPEAN ALLIES HAVE BEEN AND WILL CONTINUE TO LOOK FOR WAYS TO INVOLVE US; DESPITE THIS POSSIBILITY, WE THINK VALLETTA'S SUGGESTION IS WORTH A TRY.

7. SHOULD ALLIES RAISE WITH US AT NATO THE SUBJECT OF MILI-

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 USNATO 07739

TARY ASSISTANCE TO MALTA, WE BELIEVE THAT WE MIGHT BEST RESPOND BY SUGGESTING THE NEED FOR A EUROPEAN MILITARY AID PACKAGE PER REF B, NOTING THAT ASSISTANCE TO MALTA IS AN ISSUE WHICH WOULD SEEM TO BE MOST USEFULLY TAKEN UP IN CAPITALS. BENNETT

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